

spite of his many undoubted gifts, never rose above the second rank as a novelist; that Cladel rendered himself ridiculous by the affectation of his style, and that men like About and Feuillet had greatly declined at the period when Zola wrote. But, naturally enough, these, and all the others whom, he named, disliked to be told to their faces that they had always been or had become inferior men; and thus no little wrath was kindled in many directions.

There was, however, one man who not only showed no resentment but unhesitatingly acknowledged his own great admiration for Zola's work. And this, strange as it may seem, was Octave Feuillet, who freely expressed himself in that sense both to his friend, Adrien Marx, and to the present writer. The latter had occasion to call upon Mm with respect to one of his last books, and, some general conversation on literary matters supervening, Feuillet mentioned Zola, saying that he had at first found it almost impossible to read the writings of the Naturalist master, but having forced himself to do so, his feeling of repulsion had departed, leaving sympathy and admiration in its place. Another famous writer whom Zola attacked even more bitterly than he attacked Feuillet, one with whom, he had many a literary duel — Alexandre Dumas *fils* —

also ended
by expressing very kindly sentiments. "My
literary stand-
point," he said to the present writer, "is not
the same as
Zola's. On some matters no agreement between
us is possible. But he is a strong man; and," added
Dumas bluffly,
with a momentary flash of the paternal manner,
"what I
particularly like about him is his damned
frankness."¹

¹ It was as the Paris correspondent of various English
newspapers that
the writer became acquainted with a good many French
literary men. A